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No. 319

CAMP KEEP-OFF

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

By

HILLIARD BOOTH

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NO PLAYS EXCHANGED

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CAMP KEEP-OFF

CHARACTERS

JEFFREY HARLAND	*A rich bachelor*
VINCENT MOORE	*His friend*
PETER LORING	*A traveler*
DUBS	*A tramp*
JANE CARRINGTON	*A widow*
FLORETTE CARRINGTON	*Her daughter*
ALICE ELLIOTT	FLORETTE'S *friend*
LAURA BARKER	*A country woman*

SYNOPSIS.

ACT I. Living-room of Deserted Farm-house in a village near New York.

ACT II. The same.

TIME:—*An afternoon of the present.*

CAMP KEEP-OFF

NOTES ON CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES.

JEFFREY HARLAND. A clean-cut, good-looking man of thirty-odd years; sensitive nature. Wealthy but has quiet tastes. Wears a neat sack suit; and old trousers and flannel shirt in ACT II.

VINCENT MOORE. Nice-looking young fellow, was a college class-mate of Harland's. Light-hearted and minded. Wears a sporty motoring suit.

PETER LORING. An elderly, white-haired man, still youthful in spirit. A man who has got his education in the college of hard-work. Wears a clean but patched and wrinkled suit of clothes.

DUBS. A ragged specimen of the tramp-class, harmless but unprepossessing.

JANE CARRINGTON. A middle-aged woman made up to look as youthful as possible. Socially ambitious. Wears a smart traveling dress and motor coat. Jewelry.

FLORETTE CARRINGTON. A pretty girl of nineteen, lively and wants a good time. Wears an attractive summer dress. Motor coat.

ALICE ELLIOTT. A good looking girl of twenty, quiet and refined . Wears a plain but handsome tailored suit.

LAURA BARKER. A middle-aged country woman. Pleasant face, kind nature. Wears a gingham dress.

CAMP KEEP-OFF

ACT I.

SCENE:—*Living-room of a deserted farm-house. Door rear center from street. Door* L. *to other rooms. Fire-place* R. *An old chest of cabinet* R. *front. Window at* L. *front. An old table at center. A few old chairs. The articles of furniture are few. It is evident the room has not been used for years; dust and neglect are evident.*

DISCOVERED:—DUBS *asleep on the table center; an old and torn coverlet pulled up about his chin. A moment and* DUBS *wakes, slides off the table, stretches, picks up the ragged coverlet, folds it carefully, takes it to the cabinet* R. *front, opens cabinet, puts the coverlet inside, closes cabinet and crosses towards the window,* L. *Yawns.*

DUBS. Now for me day's work. Got to beg a meal. Begging is real work these days; folks is too close-fisted. (*Looks around*) Well, I'm puttin' up in a swell sleepin' joint this summer, and no-one the

wiser. That's somethin' to be thankful for. I'll go work old Miss Barker for a piece of her blackberry pie. The spinsters are the easiest women to work for grub, believe me! (*He opens the window* L., *climbs out, and shuts the window after him. A key turns in the door rear center. The door is pushed open and* LAURA BARKER *enters, followed in by* JEFFREY HARLAND. HARLAND *carries a suit-case. He sets it down as he looks about the room*)

LAURA. This here's the house, sir!

HARLAND. *Camp Keep-Off!*

LAURA. No, sir, it's the old Barker place.

HARLAND. The old Barker place that *was;* Camp Keep-Off that *is!* I've bought this old house as a refuge, an asylum!

LAURA. (*Startled*) An aslyum, sir? You aren't going to have a house-full of daffy people, are you?

HARLAND. (*Laughs*) No, nor of any other kind of people, Miss Barker. I mean to camp out here, to have a place where I can be alone, get away from people, have solitude! I'm tired of house-parties and hotels and people! That's why I bought this old house from you, Miss Barker.

LAURA. It needs fixing up a bit; it hasn't been lived in for many a year.

HARLAND. No, I want it just as it is; all I ask of it is quiet—rest. So this was your old home, Miss Barker?

LAURA. (*Sighs*) Yes, sir. I lived here as a girl, and many a good time we had in the old house, when Peter—(*stops short*)

HARLAND. Peter? Was Peter your brother, your father?

LAURA. No, no, sir; I forgot myself. (*Sighs*) But hard times came on, my father died, and we had to move elsewhere. The old house has stood idle ever since we moved out. My father died poor. We believed he had money—he'd saved for years—but we could never find it.

HARLAND. Perhaps it's hidden about the house somewhere?

LAURA. We thought that, but we searched the house over and over again for the money, and never found so much as a cent.

HARLAND. So I've bought a house with hidden treasure!

LAURA. (*Shakes head*) I fear there's no treasure in the house, Mr. Harland.

HARLAND. The only treasure I seek is solitude; if I fail to find that, I shall be disappointed indeed. That's why I've named this house Camp Keep-Off! a gentle hint to passers-by.

LAURA. But your friends, sir?

HARLAND. Thank heavens, none of my friends know of this investment of mine! Fifty miles from New York, and buried in an old house—what friend of mine will be able to find me? None, thank goodness!

LAURA. (*Shakes head*) A strange whim on your part, sir. (*Goes up to door*) With your permission, sir, I'll bring you over a blackberry pie I've just made. I have a reputation for blackberry pies, sir. If you don't object——?

HARLAND. (*Laughs*) That's the kind of company to which I *don't* object, Miss Barker. Bring along the pie, and thank you.

LAURA. All right, sir. I hope the roof doesn't leak. An asylum! (*She shakes her head and exits rear, closing the door after her.* HARLAND *laughs, puts his suit-case on table, opens it, and half lifts out old trousers and flannel-shirt*)

HARLAND. Now to get into some old clothes and be comfortable. (*He pauses, looks around, sighs with content*) Not a sound, not a whisper! Alone at last! No girls, no music, no dancing, no friends to haul you here and drag you there! A week of this will make me sane again, it's just the medicine I need. Solitude!

(*A sharp knock on the door rear.* HARLAND *starts The door is pushed open and* VINCENT MOORE *looks in.*)

MOORE. Hello, Jeff! (*Enters, closes door*)

HARLAND. Vincent Moore!

MOORE. I know you came here to get away from the crowd, old man, but you don't mind seeing *me*, I know that.

HARLAND. How did you know I was here at all?

MOORE. Motoring through, stopped at the village garage—a renovated hen-house!—saw your car, inquired how it got there, found out you had bought a house here, was directed to this before-the-war relic, and here I am. Look here, Jeffry Harland, I know why you've come to the country to sulk, because Alice Elliott turned you down!

HARLAND. What confounded business is it of yours?

MOORE. Calm down, calm down; I love Florette Carrington.

HARLAND. Talk sense!

MOORE. I am talking sense. Alice Elliott refused to marry you because she believed you were in love with Florette.

HARLAND. Impossible! I never gave her any reason to believe so!

MOORE. No, but Mrs. Carrington has! Mrs. Carrington wants her daughter Florette to marry money . You have money. Therefore when Mrs. Carrington saw you were about to offer your bank account to Alice Elliott, she intimated to Alice that there was an engagement impending between you and Florette. Simple as two and two is four! Alice believed Florette was in love with you, she believed you cared for Florette; she refused you as a flirt! She's jealous!

HARLAND. You, I suppose, are afraid that I *will* marry Florette!

MOORE. Sure I am, with Mama Carrington on the job. Florette is willing to marry me, but I'm not as rich as you are, so Mrs. Carrington can't see it! She wants your money for Florette. I have it—pretend to lose your money; Mrs. Carrington won't have any further use for you, Alice Elliott will accept you, and I'll marry Florette!

HARLAND. Thank you, but I'll trouble you not to interfere in my affairs.

MOORE. That's all the thanks I get for trying to make you happy! Well, I'll leave you to your solitude. (*Sits down*) After lunch.

HARLAND. I can offer you a piece of blackberry pie shortly; nothing more.

MOORE. Blackberry pie will do. Go on now, enjoy your solitude; I'm mum, I won't say a word—Say, Jeffery, Florette is the prettiest, the most charming girl who ever hesitated to a symphony orchestra; when she's around I'm in paradise. No other girl is half so graceful, so——

HARLAND. (*Interrupts*) Hang it all, if you're going to talk, get out!

(MOORE *gives* HARLAND *an injured look, compresses his lips tightly and looks the other way.* HARLAND *takes clothes from suit-case. A knock on the door rear.* HARLAND *starts. The door is pushed open and* FLORETTE CARRINGTON *and* ALICE ELLIOTT *enter .* MOORE *rises, happy.*)

FLORETTE. Is the hermit in?

MOORE. Florette, Florette! Come in, come in both of you!

FLORETTE. Oh, isn't this jolly! Come in, Alice!

ALICE. Perhaps Mr. Harland doesn't want us in.

MOORE. Of course he wants you in!

FLORETTE. I know you want to be alone, Jeffrey, but of course you don't mind *us*.

ALICE. (*Down to* HARLAND) Do you mind—us?

HARLAND. I don't mind—(*Lowers his voice*)—*you.* (ALICE *turns away.* HARLAND *speaks to* FLORETTE) How did you know I was here?

FLORETTE. We were motoring through the village when we saw Vincent's car outside the village garage. We stopped, inquired where you were, Vincent, and were told you were calling at the country house of Mr. Jeffrey Harland!

ALICE. Imagine our surprise to learn you had a country house, Mr. Harland.

HARLAND. Don't call me Mr. Harland please.

ALICE. Very well—Jeffrey Harland, country gentleman!

FLORETTE. Imagine our surprise at seeing what a barn of a place you've bought, Jeffrey. Mother wouldn't believe this was the place.

MOORE. (*Startled*) Mrs. Carrington is with you?

FORETTE. Of course. There was a handsome house up the road; she insisted *that* must be your house, Jeffrey; she's gone on to inquire for you there. This is just the place for a picnic, we ought to have brought a lunch.

MOORE. There's a blackberry pie coming soon; stay and enjoy that.

FLORETTE. What fun! You don't mind if we stay, do you, Jeff?

MOORE. Of course he doesn't mind!

ALICE. We were told in the village that this old house is supposed to contain hidden treasure! Is that why you bought it, Mr. Har— Jeffrey?

HARLAND. It is not. The only treasure I hope to find here is solitude.

FLORETTE. There must be lots of that. Of course you'll give a house-warming with a dance. A little paint and carpenter's work will make this room quite presentable. Mother will be glad to chaperon for you.

ALICE. Please don't send *me* an invitation! Unless you need extra music, and then of course I'll be willing to play *second fiddle!*

HARLAND . That is an unjust insinuation, Miss Elliott!

ALICE. Don't call me Miss Elliott!

HARLAND. Very well—Alice Elliott, heartless spinster.

ALICE. *Spinster* is worse than Miss Elliott!

FLORETTE. Don't pay any attention to him, Alice; he's a bear! Leave him alone——!

MOORE. Yes, he wants to be alone; leave him alone!

(ALICE *joins* FLORETTE *and* MOORE R., *near fireplace; they chat and laugh as* HARLAND, L., *regards them with set lips.*)

HARLAND. (*Grimly*) Less noise, please; I can't hear myself think!

(*The three cease their chatter abruptly and look at* HARLAND *with indignation.* HARLAND *smiles. A knock on the door rear.* HARLAND *starts; the others smile as the door is pushed open and* PETER LORING *enters.*)

PETER. Well, well, a party of young folks! What does this mean?

HARLAND. Who are *you?*

PETER. A traveler. Loring's my name, Peter Loring. I used to live in these parts as a boy. Many a good time I had in this very house. I just got into town, and I came to see if the Barkers still lived here.

HARLAND. They do not. No one has lived here for years. I own this house. I bought it as an asylum—for anybody and everybody! Come in, come in, the blackberry pie will be here shortly!

FLORETTE. Come, Vincent, let's go look for the hidden treasure! (*Crosses* L.)

MOORE. Yes, come on, Alice. (*Crosses* L.)

ALICE. No, I'll stay here.

FLORETTE. Warn us if you see mother coming! Hurry along, Vincent!

(FLORETTE *exits through door* L., *followed off by* MOORE. ALICE *and* HARLAND *seat themselves as far apart as possible, glance at each other and look away quickly.* LORING *observes this.*)

LORING. You folks has quarreled, I see that. (*They show irritation*) Don't mind an old man, who's lived a life of unhappiness because he quarreled with the girl he loved . And what about? She thought I cared for another girl—(ALICE *starts*)—and the other girl never told the truth about it. We were proud, high-tempered—young. We quarreled, I set out to make my way in the world—and the girl never sent for me. Only last year I learned the truth of the matter when I met a woman from this place. I come back here—(*He looks around*)—but I guess I've come too late. (*Sighs*) What treasure is supposed to be hidden here that the young couple's looking for?

HARLAND. Mr. Barker's money—if he had any—was never found after his death. Some people think the money is hidden here in the house.

LORING. Mr. Barker *did* have money; that I know. I wonder! (*He looks around*) He might have stuck it up the chimney; there were loose bricks there. (*He crosses* R., *kneels before fireplace and looks up chimney.* HARLAND *crosses* L. *to* ALICE)

HARLAND. Alice, if you think I care for Florette, you're wrong. I care for you. I always have. I always will.

ALICE. I think you mean to marry Florette!

HARLAND. How can you think that?

ALICE. Mrs Carrington told me she hoped you would settle five hundred thousand dollars on Florette!

HARLAND. (*Staggered*) What!

JANE. (*From outside*) Florette! Florette, where are you. Mr. Harland!

ALICE. (*Calls through the door* L.) Florette, it's your mother; join us quickly. (*She goes up to door rear*) Stop her coming in till Florette comes back. (*She exits rear*) This way, Mrs. Carrington.

HARLAND. (*Up to door rear*) Five hundred thousand dollars! We'll see about that. (*Exits rear*)

(FLORETTE *and* MOORE *run in* L. LORING *crosses* L., *shaking his head sadly.*)

LORING. The old house! What memories! What memories! (*Looks off* L.) The old parlor! (*Shakes head and exits* L. FLORETTE *pulls a package from the pocket of her motor-coat*)

FLORETTE. Look, Vincent! (*Opens package. and shows rings, bracelets, chains, etc.*)

MOORE. Shades of King Solomon! Where did you get the sparklers?

FLORETTE. At the village five and ten cent store!

MOORE. What!

FLORETTE. Yes, as a joke on Jeffrey! I bought it as soon as I heard about the hidden treasure! We'll hide it, Jeffrey'll find it, and think he's found the long-lost jewels!

MOORE. Fine and dandy! Good joke on Jeffrey! Where'll we hide it?

FLORETTE. (R. *front*) In this cabinet!

MOORE. The very place! (*Opens cabinet*)

FLORETTE. (*Takes out coverlet*) I'll put them under this cloth. (*Puts jewelry under coverlet and* MOORE *closes the cabinet*) I hope he'll find it while we're here!

MOORE. (*Nods*) What a joke!

(JANE CARRINGTON *enters rear with* JEFFREY HARLAND *and* ALICE ELLIOTT.)

JANE. Florette, dear; what will Mr. Harland say to see you alone with Mr. Moore! The child is thoughtless, Jeffrey, no more. (*Looks around*) So *this* is the house in which you have invested! (*Shows her disapproval*) Of course you mean to renovate it, Jeffrey, re-model it into something modern and luxurious.

HARLAND. I do not.

JANE. No? Then what possible purpose could you have had in buying such a place?

HARLAND. I mean to live here.

JANE. *To live here?* (*Looks at* HARLAND *sharply*) Do you mean—is it possible—have you had *financial reverses?*

HARLAND. (*Starts*) I have found it *necessary* to come here, that's all I care to say, Mrs. Carrington.

JANE. But if you have lost your money! Florette, my child, let us be going at once.

ALICE. Jeffrey has *not* lost his money, Mrs. Carrington; he has bought this house as a whim, nothing more.

(HARLAND *starts, but can say nothing.*)

MOORE. That's the sad truth, Mrs, Carrington; he's going to give a dance here and wants you to chaperon the affair.

JANE. Why, gladly, Jeffrey! Florette, tell Jefrey how happy you are that he has not lost his fortune.

FLORETTE. (*Runs to* HARLAND) Oh, Jeffrey, you *are* going to give a dance, aren't you? Say you are!

HARLAND. (*Bangs suit-case shut*) There's one thing I *am* going to do, and that's to go into the next room and put on my old clothes! Have a dance, have a circus, have anything you like, but leave me out of it—*please!* (*He takes up suit-case and exits through door* L., *irritated*)

JANE. Jeffrey is annoyed at finding *you* here, Vincent. You take up too much of Florette's time.

MOORE. I came here first!

JANE. Do you insinuate that my daughter *pursued* you here? Come, Florette!

FLORETTE. (*Sits*) I refuse to go until I've had a piece of that blackberry pie!

MOORE. So do I!

(PETER LORING *enters from* L.)

JANE. Where *is* the pie?

ALICE. Mr. Harland will get it, I suppose.

LORING. Harland's putting on a suit of old clothes.

JANE. A strange thing for him to do. (*To* ALICE) Are you *sure* he hasn't lost his money.

ALICE. Quite sure! (*Looks through window* L.) Here he comes with the pie now!

JANE. (*Looks through window, shudders*) What a disreputable suit of clothes!

MOORE. He's making for the window!

FLORETTE. He thinks we've gone! Let's give him a surprise!

MOORE. Yes. Come back where he can't see us. Sh!

FLORETTE. Sh!

LORING. Sh!

(JANE, ALICE, FLORETTE, MOORE *and* LORING *go quietly up* L., *and wait, expectant, their eyes on the window* L. *front.* DUBS *climbs in the window, a blackberry pie in his hand. He steps inside the room, his eyes glued hungrily on the pie.*)

DUBS. Stolen fruit is always sweetest! Now for the gorge of me life! (*Starts center to table.* JANE, ALICE, FLORETTE, MOORE *and* LORING *come down quickly, laughing*)

MOORE. The pie, Jeffrey!

FLORETTE. Give us the pie!

JANE. What a hideous disguise!

ALICE. (*Laughs*) Oh, *Jeffrey!*

LORING. You're caught, Mr. Harland!

(DUBS, *at sight of them, jumps back against cabinet, frightened. As they try to surround him, he dodges up* R., *clasping the pie, and makes for the door rear.* MOORE *gets to the door first, and prevent* DUBS' *escape.*)

MOORE. No, you don't, Jeff!

(FLORETTE, LORING, JANE *and* ALICE *run up* R. *after* DUBS. DUBS, *desperate, runs round table and down* L.)

DUBS. Lord help me!

FLORETTE. The pie! Give us the pie!

MOORE. Don't be stingy!

ALICE. Stop him!

LORING. I can't!

(*At* L. *front* DUBS *dives through the window and disappers with the pie.* FLORETTE *climbs out of the window;* LORING *out through the window after her.* MOORE *opens the door rear,*

and runs out the door. JANE *hurries up to door, followed by* ALICE.)

FLORETTE. After him, after him, catch him! don't let him escape! (*Through window.*)

LORING. Come back with the pie. (*Through window*)

MOORE. He's making for the woods! Hurry! (*Exits at door rear*)

JANE. Florette, come back! Mr. Harland! (*Exits rear, puffing*)

ALICE. Jeffrey, are you mad. (*Pauses in door rear, looks off*)

VOICES. (*Heard off-stage*) The pie! the pie!

Quick Curtain.

ACT II.

SCENE:—*The same. A moment later.*

DISCOVERED:—ALICE *standing in the doorway, looking off, shading her eyes with her hand.* JEFFREY HARLAND *enters* L., *dressed in old trousers and flannel shirt. He crosses to fireplace, takes out pipe, lights it, turns, sees* ALICE, *starts; then folds his arms, and puffs on pipe watching* ALICE *shakes her head.*)

ALICE. They've all disappeared in the woods. (*Turns down. She sees* HARLAND, *stops short with surprise*)

HARLAND. I'm glad they've all taken to the woods. What moved them?

ALICE. You!

HARLAND. They got it through their stupid heads that I didn't want them, did they?

ALICE. No. They were chasing you—you and a blackberry pie.

HARLAND. (*Laughs*) Not I!

ALICE. Who then?

HARLAND. I give it up. This old house seems to be a popular resort; it might have been anyone! Do you mind if I give you a lecture? (ALICE *shrugs, comes down* L.) Always tell the truth. You told Mrs. Carrington that I had *not* lost my money!

ALICE. (*Startled*) Jeffrey! Have you lost your money?

HARLAND. Do you suppose I would be here in this old house, in these old clothes if I had not lost my money? Am I given to whims? Do you see anything attractive or comfortable in these quarters?

ALICE. But you call this Camp Keep-Off. I thought you came here for solitude.

HARLAND. Because I try to keep cheerful, and put a brave front on matters, don't jump to the conclusion that it's all a joke.

ALICE. (*Crosses to* HARLAND) Oh, Jeffrey, I'm so sorry! I had no idea that your affairs had gone badly, that you were really poor. Please forgive me, Jeffrey.

HARLAND. Alice, think of that story of Peter Loring's; he was separated from the girl he loved through a floolish misunderstanding. He's lived a lonely life.

ALICE. (*Nods*) I dare say the girl has lived a lonely life, too.

HARLAND. (*Nods*) All through a foolish misunderstanding.

ALICE. (*Nods*) Yes.

HARLAND. Alice, I asked you to marry me when I was rich; now you understand that I'm poor, and I can't ask you to marry me.

ALICE. You might—try.

HARLAND. No. It wouldn't be honorable. Could I ask you to live in an old house like this? Never.

ALICE. Jeffrey, you know I think this house

could be made most attractive at a very little expense.

HARLAND. I shall keep the place as bachelor quarters, I suppose, for the rest of my life.

ALICE. Indeed you won't! (*As* HARLAND *turns to her eagerly*) Jeffrey, I'll marry you on one condition—that Mrs. Carrington convinces me you are not to marry Florette!

HARLAND. Please note that I haven't asked you to marry me!

ALICE. That doesn't matter in the least. Poverty shan't stand between us—if Jane Carrington doesn't! Of course you can refuse me if you want to.

HARLAND. I want to—(*Nears her*)

ALICE. What? Refuse me?

HARLAND. No—kiss you!

ALICE. (*Holds up forbidding hand*) That depends on Mrs. Carrington!

(LAURA BARKER *enters rear, flustered.*)

LAURA. Oh, Mr. Harland, Mr. Harland, somebody stole my blackberry pie! I left it on the ledge of the pantry window, and when I got home it was gone!

HARLAND. The thief, whoever he is, is being pursued by Mrs. Jane Carrington, Miss Carrington, Mr. Vincent Moore and a Mr. Loring.

LAURA. Loring?

(PETER LORING *enters rear, breathless.*)

PETER. The young folks out-run me; they closed in on him, but I think he got away. (*Sees* HARLAND) Why, here's Harland now!

HARLAND. (*Laughs*) I was not the possessor of the pie!

LAURA. (*Who has stared at* LORING) Peter!

PETER. Laura! (*They gaze at one another, amazed*) Laura Barker!

LAURA. Peter Loring in the flesh!

HARLAND (*To* ALICE) Let's go and find the others.

ALICE. Yes.

(HARLAND *and* ALICE *go up quietly; and exit rear. The others pay no attention to them.*)

PETER. I never did love that Simpson girl, Laura.

LAURA. I believe it now; I was a fool not to believe it then.

PETRE. We were both fools. There's a saying that "there's no fool like an old fool," Laura, but it aint so. There's no fool like a young fool, and when you take two young fools you've got the most foolish combination there is.

LAURA. I believe you're right, Peter.

PETER. Ever marry, Laura?

LAURA. No. After father died we moved over to Aunt Nancy's. Father left no money.

PETER. Your father had money.

LAURA. We could never find it. Is—is your wife with you, Peter?

PETER. I never married!

LAURA. (*Glad*) Didn't you?

PETER. I've worked and wandered all my life; wandered and worked. I'm not rich. There's many would call me poor. Would you be a poor man's wife, Laura?

LAURA. I'd be *your* wife, Peter Loring!

PETER. Thank God for that! (*He takes her hand and kisses it gently*) Laura, your father had money, he must have had it about the house somewhere. (R. *front*) Have you searched in this cabinet?

LAURA. Yes, more than once.

PETRE. No harm to search the secret-drawer once again. (*Hand on cabinet.* DUBS, *sticks his head in the window* L. LAURA *sees* DUBS, *and screams*)

LAURA. Look! There's the man who stole my pie!

(LORING *turns and looks as* HARLAND *is heard from outside.*)

HARLAND. There he is! By the window! Catch him!

LORING. We'll head him off!

LAURA. Hurry!

(DUBS *withdraws his head.* LORING *and* LAURA *hurry up as they speak, and exit rear. A second and* DUBS *dashes in through the door rear, frightened, breathless, the pie still clutched in his arms. He shuts the door after him, mops his brow with his sleeve, and hurries down* L. *to the window, and glances out of it.*)

DUBS. I've give 'em de slip! I'll have to put this pie in me safety-deposit vault till the crowd gets out of here! (*Takes a bite out of the pie as he crosses quickly* R. *front and opens the cabinet*) Farewell till this evenin', Oh pie of me heart! (*Lifts up coverlet and falls back in astonishment at sight of the jewelry. He takes it out, wide-eyed and dazzled*) Di'monds! Rubies! Rings! Bracelets! See 'em shine! see 'em sparkle! Oh Lord! Oh Jimminy Crickety! It's a fortune, it's a million! I'll have me own automobubble, a couple of yachts, a private Pullman! (*Stuffs the jewels in his pockets*) I'll see the world, I'll buy up half of it, I'll—I'll—, by Heck, I'll get a square meal! (*He tosses the pie in the cabinet, shuts cabinet, starts up. Voices heard off.* DUBS *crosses* L. *front to*

window, draws back, startled; goes to door L.) Have to hide in here! (DUBS *exits* L. PETER LORING *climbs in the window* L., *as* HARLAND, JANE, ALICE *and* LAURA *enter at rear*)

LORING. I thought he came this way— but I didn't see him!

HARLAND. He's made off with the pie, that's certain!

JANE. Where is Florette, that's what I wish to know!

ALICE. She's with Vincent!

JANE. Very good, but where is Vincent? (*Turns to* HARLAND)

HARLAND. With Florette! Here they are. (FLORETTE *and* MOORE *enter from rear, hand in hand. They separate*) Don't ask me for the pie, please. I haven't got it, never had it. It was a tramp who stole it!

ALICE. I wish you *did* have the pie, Jeffrey, I'm getting awfully hungry.

FLORETTE. So am I!

MOORE. And I!

JANE. Hunger is vulgar, otherwise I should feel the need of nourishment myself.

FLORETTE. Vincent has something to tell you mother.

MOORE. The fact is, Mrs. Carrington—the fact is—; it *is* a fact, you know!

JANE. I am waiting!

MOORE. Don't wait, please! I don't mean that! I—(*Confused*)

JANE. What *do* you mean?

HARLAND. I think he is trying to tell you that I am a pauper, Mrs. Carrington; that I'm on my uppers, a man with empty pockets!

(JANE *and* MOORE *both start.* JANE *turns to* ALICE. MOORE *and* HARLAND *speak low to one another.*)

MOORE. Jeff, you're really poor?

HARLAND. No. If Mrs. Carrington *believes* I'm poor, she'll convince Alice I'm not going to marry Florette!

MOORE. Acting on my advice to pretend poverty, eh?

HARLAND. Yes, Sh!

ALICE. (*To* JANE) I fear I was mistaken when I told you Jeffrey had bought this house for a whim, Mrs. Carrington; it seems he was driven to the purchase by necessity.

JANE. Florette, come here to your mother! I regret to hear of your loss, Mr. Harland. Of course Florette and I will still be glad to have you call at the house—once a month or so.

MOORE. Jeff, old man, it's a shame you're down and out. Let me lend you a V. (*Takes out bill*)

HARLAND. Thanks. (*Takes the money*)

MOORE. (*Indignant*) What! I mean—don't mention it.

FLORETTE. Now is the time to find the hidden treasure, Jeffrey—now, when you need the money!

MOORE. Have you looked in that cabinet?

LORING. I told Miss Barker she ought to search that cabinet. I belive old man Barker's money is there.

LAURA. It's your cabinet now, Mr. Harland.

HARLAND. To satisfy you all, I'll look. (*He opens cabinet.* FLORETTE *and* MOORE *nudge one another, expectant.* HARLAND *starts, lifts out the pie*) The pie!

LAURA. Yes—my blackberry pie!

ALICE. How did it get there?

FLORETTE. What became of the jewelry?

JANE. What jewelry?

FLORETTE (*As* MOORE *starts to speak*) Sh! (*Low*) They'll have the laugh on us.

HARLAND. (*Puts pie on table*) Before dispatch-

ing this pie, Alice has somehing to tell you. Tell them I have accepted your offer, Alice.

ALICE. Yes. You see——

LORING. (*Starts at a thought and interrupts*) Just a minute. (*To* HARLAND) Is your name Jeffrey Harland? (HARLAND *nods.* LORING *draws newspaper from his pocket*) You're not poor, Mr. Harland. You've inherited a fortune from a second cousin in England. Read that!

JANE. (*Takes paper out of* LORING'S *hands and looks at it*) True! Florette, congratulate Jeffrey. Tell him how happy you will be to have him to tea to-morrow! There's a dance in the evening, Jeffrey. Florette is giving a theatre-party on Wednesday. Of course you'll come.

ALICE. Of course he will.

JANE. What were you about to tell us, Alice dear?

ALICE. Nothing! (*To* HARLAND) All obstacles are now removed; you can be completely happy. I wish you joy. (*She goes up*)

HARLAND. (*Angry*) I never did have any use for that second cousin!

JANE. Let us cut the pie, Jeffrey, my appetite is excellent.

FLORETTE. Vincent has something to tell you, mother.

MOORE. Yes, I—I—let me cut the pie for you, do! (*Takes out pen-knife and cuts pie feverishly.* FLORETTE *throws up her hands in despair*)

JANE. Pie, Alice?

ALICE. Thanks, no. (*Stands up* L., *disheartened*)

JANE. Pie, Jeffrey?

HARLAND. *No!* (*Up* R., *folds his arms, gloomy.* JANE, FLORETTE *and* MOORE, *center, eat pieces of the pie hungrily.* LORING *goes* R. *front to cabinet*)

LORING. You haven't looked in the secret drawer yet.

LAURA. (*Down* R.) Was there really a secret drawer, Peter?

LORING. What! you didn't know it was there?

LAURA. Father never told us a word of it!

LORING. I saw your father work it once. There was a spring behind the lock, here. (*Feels in cabinet*)

LAURA. (*Excited*) No, no, there can't be anything there.

FLORETTE. What, a real treasure? (*Down* R., *followed by* JANE *and* MOORE)

JANE. It's like a novel.

MOORE. Who ever heard of anyone eating blackberry pie in a novel!

LORING. It works stiffly. (*Arm in cabinet*) There! The side-board drops, see? Here's the drawer, and——

LAURA. Money! Bills! Father's fortune! Oh, oh, oh! (*Sobs into apron*)

LORING. (*Lifts out drawer full of old bills, coins, etc.*) Your father's money—Laura; the savings of a lifetime.

LAURA. (*Weeps happily as the others exclaim*) It was there all the time—Father's fortune!

FLORETTE. A real hidden treasure!

JANE. It must be covered with germs!

HARLAND. (*Down* R., *as* ALICE, *interested, comes down* L.) Good for you, Loring; I'm glad the money's come to light, Miss Barker.

LAURA. But you bought the house! Have I a right to the money?

HARLAND. Rather! It's yours, every cent of it.

MOORE. What are you going to do with it?

LAURA. If—If Mr. Harland ever wants to sell this house back to me—ever gets tired of it——

HARLAND. (*Interrupts*) It's yours right now—at half price! This isn't Camp Keep-Off, it's Camp Come-On! After what's happened here to-day, rest and quiet are out of the question.

LAURA. Peter—we'll go house-keeping in the old house!

LORING. Splendid! I'll furnish it.

LAURA. It's already furnished—with memories! (*Crosses to* LORING)

FLORETTE. Why, I believe they're going to be married! (HARLAND *shakes* LORING'S *hand.* ALICE *kisses* LAURA, *who takes the drawer* L. *front to show her*) Vincent has something to say to you, mother.

MOORE. No, no, Florette, I can't! I haven't the courage!

FLORETTE. You must!

MOORE. I won't! (*Goes up* R.)

FLORETTE. (*Indignant*) What?

JANE. Florette, dear, you are neglecting Jeffrey. Come, Alice, let us leave the young people alone together; I am sure they have something to say to one another.

HARLAND. Mrs. Carrington, I protest!

ALICE. Don't mind me, Jeffrey, say what you please to Florette! (*Angry, goes up* L. *with* JANE, *who smiles.* LAURA *lays the drawer on chair*)

LAURA. You'll n-n-need napkins after that p-p-pie. I think there's some old towels in the pantry. Oh, I'm that happy! (*She exits* L.)

FLORETTE. (*Center, to* HARLAND) Jeffrey, dear, I'm glad you're rich. You don't know how happy I am. I'm *so* happy! Oh, so, so happy! (*She puts her arms about* HARLAND'S *neck.* HARLAND *stands dismayed; tries to remove her arms.* ALICE *clenches hands and stamps foot with anger.* JANE *smiles, well pleased.* MOORE *grits his teeth, shows anger*)

HARLAND. I—I; Florette, please don't.

FLORETTE. Why should we be afraid to declare our love before the world, Jeffrey? I have controlled myself as long as possible. I am going to kiss you.

ALICE. (*Down* L.) Oh! Oh! This is too much!

MOORE. (*Down* R.) You are *not* going to kiss him, I forbid it!

FLORETTE. What have you to say about it?

JANE. (*Down*) Yes, Mr. Moore, what have you to say about it?

MOORE. I'm—I'm—(*Wipes his brow, stutters*)

FLORETTE. (*To* HARLAND) One beautiful kiss, Jeffrey, upon the lips. (*She pulls the struggling* HARLAND'S *face down to hers.* MOORE *springs forward*)

MOORE. Stop! I'm—*I'm her husband!*

JANE. Her—*What?*

(FLORETTE *releases* HARLAND.)

FLORETTE. (*To* MOORE) There, you *did* tell mother after all, didn't you? I made you do it. It's true, Mother. We—we were chasing the pie when we lost our way, met a Justice of the Peace, and—and——

MOORE. And he did the rest!

HARLAND. (*Amazed, pleased*) Florette? You're married to Vincent? I could kiss you! (*Starts to do so.* MOORE *pulls* FLORETTE *quickly away*)

MOORE. No, you don't! (JANE *rises from chair into which she had collapsed*) Mother, please forgive us.

JANE. The tragedy of it, after all the plans I had made for the welfare, the happiness of Florette! (*To* HARLAND) What have *you* to say to this perfidious fellow, Vincent Moore?

HARLAND. God bless you! (*Shakes* MOORE'S *hand*) And here's your V. (*Gives bill*) Alice! (*Crosses to Alice*)

ALICE. Florette and Vincent love one another, Mrs. Carrington.

JANE. Love! What is love?

ALICE. Everthing

LORING. Yes!

MOORE. (*In a loud whisper to* JANE) The doctors tell me my rich Uncle Dick can't last out the month; he has made me his sole heir.

JANE. You are right. Alice, love *is* everything. My children, I forgive you!

HARLAND. Alice, do you believe at last it's only you I care for?

ALICE. I'd like you better if you weren't rich,—but—(*Hesitates*)

HARLAND. But—?

(*A scream from* LAURA *off-stage.* DUBS *dashes in from* L, *decorated with the rings, bracelets, chains, etc.* LAURA *runs in* L. *after him and crosses to* LORING *as* DUBS *springs between* ALICE *and* HARLAND, *and* HARLAND *seizes hold of* DUBS.)

LAURA. Stop him!

(DUBS *and* HARLAND *roll to the floor in a sharp struggle, as the others surround him, excited.* DUBS *tears* HARLAND'S *shirt, musses his hair and smears* HARLAND'S *face with soot.* HARLAND *gets a grip on* DUBS *coat;* DUBS *slips out of his coat and vaults up on the table.*)

MOORE. He has our jewels!

DUBS. They're *my* jools!

FLORETTE. They're paste!

DUBS. Paste! Hully gee! (*He claps his hand to his head and collapses on top of the table.* HARLAND *rises, and faces* ALICE, *breathless, sooty and disheveled*)

HARLAND. You'd rather I wasn't rich, *but*——

ALICE. (*Laughs*) I'll take you *as* you are!

(*A general laugh as* ALICE *takes* HARLAND'S *hands.*)

Curtain.

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